

JUSTIFICATION IN ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, WITH SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE¹

Donald Fairbairn PhD

Robert E. Cooley Professor of Early Christianity

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

dfairbairn@gcts.edu

Abstract: *T. F. Torrance once commented that no one in the history of theology has ever expounded the evangelical doctrine of justification by grace better than St. Cyril of Alexandria. Torrance never substantiated this surprising claim, and this article attempts to do so by exploring Cyril's concept of justification. It surveys the vocabulary Cyril uses for justification or righteousness and analyzes four key exegetical passages in depth, concluding from this analysis that Cyril uses active and passive forms to show that righteousness has its source in God/Christ/grace, comes to the Christian from the outside, and is received by faith. The article further analyzes the relation between justification and sanctification in Cyril's thought, arguing that Cyril uses both of these terms to refer to a righteousness given to the Christian from the outside, rather than to an internally-produced righteousness. The article concludes by noting points of contact with and differences between Cyril's understanding and both modern Protestantism and modern Eastern Orthodoxy. It suggests that Cyril's concept of the Christian's personal participation in the Son's relationship to the Father, from which both justification and sanctification flow, may be a helpful subject for ecumenical dialogue between Protestants and the Orthodox.*

It goes without saying that T. F. Torrance was a giant of twentieth-century British theology. His range was extraordinary – from patristics to Barth, from core doctrinal developments to theology's interaction with modern science, from the Reformed tradition to ecumenical dialogue with Eastern Orthodoxy. Torrance was also a kind encourager of young scholars, and I remember with fondness his correspondence with me about Cyril of Alexandria while I was doing my PhD in

1 I would like to thank my research assistant, Thomas Hill, for his assistance in the background study for this article.



Cambridge in the late 1990s. That encouragement and his perspective on the development of Greek patristic theology have had a profound influence on my own interpretation of the great doctrinal developments of the fourth through sixth centuries. Torrance impressed on me the importance of what he called the "Athanasian-Cyrillian axis" as a way past the rocks on which East-West dialogue often runs aground, and my own work on Cyril and in patristics in general has reflected that impress. Indeed, I am honored that several colleagues, without knowing my history, have nevertheless recognized in my own work the influence of T. F. Torrance. I count it a privilege to write for a journal devoted to Torrance studies, and an equal privilege, as a Protestant theologian, to be contributing to an issue of *Participatio* addressing Torrance's long interaction with Eastern Orthodoxy.

The subject for my article was suggested to me by Matthew Baker, associate editor of *Participatio*, who noted that Torrance once commented that no one had better expounded the evangelical doctrine of justification by grace than Cyril of Alexandria. Baker pointed out to me that nowhere in Torrance's corpus does he elaborate on this cryptic comment and asked me whether I would be willing to do so. I eagerly agreed, not only because I believe Torrance's brief remark is correct, but also because I think Cyril's particular understanding of justification is one from which both Protestant and Eastern Orthodox theology can learn.

In this article, I will address Cyril's understanding of justification by doing five things. First, I will briefly discuss Torrance's comment about Cyril's doctrine of justification and the possible reason for the under-emphasis on this aspect of his thought in patristic scholarship. Second, I will summarize and categorize the various words and phrases Cyril uses for justification and describe some of the implications of this vocabulary. Third, I will describe in some depth Cyril's exegesis of four key biblical passages related to justification. Fourth, I will suggest a way of understanding the relation between justification and sanctification in Cyril's thought. Finally, I will draw some conclusions about the way Cyril's understanding of justification can both provide common ground for dialogue between Protestants and the Orthodox, and offer a challenge to both groups to sharpen their own thinking about salvation.

I. The Apparent Under-emphasis on Justification in Cyril's Writings

Torrance's reference to justification in Cyril comes as he explains the Protestant Reformation to Orthodox readers in a 1983 article. He writes:

The Reformation was an attempt against the hard structure of Roman canon law to recover the essential nature and form of the ancient Catholic Church by calling for a Christological correction of its doctrinal innovations and its ecclesiastical structure. For it called for a recovery of the evangelical doctrine of justification by grace (nowhere better expounded in all the history of theology than by the impeccably orthodox Cyril of Alexandria), a liberation of the doctrine and practice of the Eucharist from the hard crust of Aristotelian notions of causality, and an emancipation of the ministry and the nature of its authority from the patterns assimilated into the Church from the Roman Empire and its replacement by the ancient patristic and conciliar concept of ministry and authority through communion of *koinonia* which took an essentially corporate form.²

Torrance argues further that this effort to reform Christianity around Christ himself was trapped by the rising nationalisms of Europe and cut off from essential input from the Orthodox Churches. Now (in 1983), Torrance claims, it is possible to gain such input and to complete the needed reform that the Protestant Reformation brought about only incompletely.

Torrance's claim holds forth promise for ecumenical dialogue, but at the same time his comment about Cyril's view of justification would seem to offer a surprising and poor starting place for such conversation. Not only does Cyril never use the exact phrase "justification by grace,"³ but he is one of the Greek church's foremost champions of the doctrine of *θέωσις* or deification, and thus of a participatory concept of salvation, rather than the forensic understanding that undergirds the classical Protestant idea of justification. Furthermore, Cyril regards *δικαιοσύνη* and *ἁγιασμός* as virtual synonyms,⁴ a fact that appears to fly directly in the face of the classical Protestant distinction between justification and sanctification.

Indeed, Cyril's persistent link between *δικαιοσύνη* and *ἁγιασμός* would seem in and of itself to invalidate Torrance's claim. Daniel Keating argues:

2 Thomas F. Torrance, "The Orthodox Church in Great Britain," *Texts and Studies* 2 (1983): 254.

3 He does, however, use a variety of related expressions, as we shall see below.

4 As Daniel Keating helpfully summarizes, "Cyril typically groups together as the characteristics of baptism into new life what later theology has at times more clearly distinguished: justification by faith, sanctification of body and soul, elevation to the status of divine sonship, and participation in the divine nature. While these are distinguishable in Cyril, he does not order these elements sequentially, either temporally or theologically, in the description of our entrance into new life through baptism." Daniel A. Keating, "Divinization in Cyril," in *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation*, ed. Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 161n30.

In Cyril's narrative account of salvation, divine initiative is primary. Salvation and life are properly from God alone, and even the virtues that obtain in us are seen primarily as gifts of God, not as objects of our attainment. Yet in Cyril's view we are actively engaged at every stage, from the first signs of faith to mature conformity to Christ. There is no marking off of justification from sanctification as distinguishable stages in our attainment of divine life. Nor does Cyril appear to indicate a distinction between our part in justification and our part in sanctification, initial or ongoing. Faith and love are the co-ordinate responses to *each* encounter with God, and both secure our possession of the divine life and cause us to cling to Christ, the source of that life. In the end, the gracious activity of God precedes and grounds our response of faith and love. Even faith itself is described as the preeminent gift of grace.⁵

In this excellent summary of Cyril's soteriology, Keating emphasizes that Cyril does not distinguish justification and sanctification because he does not attempt to sort out "distinguishable stages" in Christian life or even distinguishable roles assigned to God and to humanity. He views all aspects of salvation in terms of divine life, and he views the whole of an individual's salvation as the work of both God and that individual. There is, or at least there seems to be, no hint of any focus on an initial declaration by God and an on-going active holiness in which the Christian cooperates. How then can one even speak of a concept of justification in Cyril?

At first, it would seem that one cannot speak of any such concept. Given that the Greek word δικαιοσύνη can and usually does mean simply "righteousness," if one does not distinguish this kind of righteousness from the holiness produced gradually in sanctification, then one can hardly be said to espouse the Protestant understanding of justification. To say it differently, if δικαιοσύνη is the same as holiness, then it is not "justification" and should not even be translated as such. Accordingly, most theologians who *do* emphasize justification in the Protestant sense distinguish it sharply from other aspects of salvation, with justification as a passively-received righteousness accomplished by grace through faith, and sanctification as a cooperatively-produced holiness/righteousness in which the believer's active effort plays a major role. As Keating makes clear, Cyril does not make this distinction. Furthermore, most theologians who emphasize justification in the Protestant sense regard it as very central to their soteriology — in contrast to Cyril for whom it is merely one emphasis among several, and hardly the main one. Because Cyril does not do either of these things, scholars can be excused for

5 Daniel A. Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 141.

thinking that justification is not a major aspect of his thought, and the lack of scholarly attention to a concept of justification in his writings is thus perfectly understandable.

Nevertheless, Keating's statement quoted in the previous paragraph also indicates something else that is very important to Cyril – something that makes his view of justification worth exploring. The *reason* he does not distinguish justification and sanctification is not that he collapses justification into sanctification by seeing both as an actively-produced righteousness, that is, as something that God produces *within* the Christian through the believer's cooperation with the work of grace. Rather, I think the reason is that he sees both justification and sanctification – and indeed all aspects of salvation – flowing directly from God himself and as given to the Christian by God *from the outside*. This is not to say that Cyril ignores the necessity of inward transformation in the life of a Christian; he does not. Rather, he sees such inward transformation as the manifestation of the Christian's new identity as a child of God, an identity that is given through the believer's union to Christ, the true Son. This identity is given from without, and as a result the righteousness/holiness that accompanies it is, at the most basic level, given from the outside, not so much produced from within. It seems to me that Cyril's concept of a righteousness given from without means that he does have a discernible idea of justification with some affinities to the Protestant understanding. And this, I suggest, has important implications for Protestant-Orthodox dialogue.

II. Cyril's Vocabulary of Justification/Righteousness

Because the Greek word δικαιοσύνη can mean simply "righteousness," a mere listing of the passages in which Cyril uses the word (1214 instances, according to a TLG search) would tell us relatively little about whether he teaches anything resembling the Protestant sense of justification. More fruitful for our purposes is the fact that Cyril frequently uses a variety of expressions that link δικαιοσύνη to faith or to grace, and that indicate that God, Christ, or grace is the direct source of our righteousness.

Cyril uses the actual phrase δικαιοσύνη ἐν πίστει only nine times in his writings (once in *De ador.*, twice in *Glaph. Pent.*, once in *Expos. Psalm.*, once in *Com. Is.*, three times in *Com. Johan.*, and once in *Frag. Rom.*).⁶ But he uses the essentially equivalent phrase δικαιοσύνη ἐν χάριτι 17 times (twice in *De ador.*,

⁶ Throughout this article, I refer to Cyril's works by abbreviations of the Latin titles. The full titles and the location of the best text for each work are found in the table at the end of the article.

three times in *Glaph. Pent.*, twice in *Expos. Psalm.*, four times in *Com. Is.*, once in *Com. proph. min.*, four times in *Com. Luc.*, and once in *Ep. pasch.*). In all 26 of the passages where he uses one or the other of these phrases, Cyril employs the preposition ἐν with the anarthrous form πίστει, never the arthrous form τῇ πίστει or the anarthrous πίστει without a preposition.

Cyril uses phrases equivalent to “justified by faith” 75 times in his writings (24 times in *De ador.*, 23 times in *Glaph. Pent.*, twice in *Expos. Psalm.*, eight times in *Com. Is.*, twelve times in *Com. proph. min.*, once in *Com. Johan.*, once in *Frag. Rom.*, once in *Frag. Heb.*, and three times in *Trin. dial.*). These are passages where a passive participle or passive infinitive of the verb δικαιῶ is used to describe Christians, usually in connection with ἐν πίστει, or rarely τῇ πίστει or even simply πίστει. Furthermore, Cyril uses a passive form of δικαιῶ with χάριτι eleven times in his writings (once in *De ador.*, once in *Expos. Psalm.*, twice in *Com. Is.*, once in *Com. Johan.*, twice in *Frag. Rom.*, three times in *Ep. pasch.*, once in *Hom. div.*). Thus, there are 86 passages in which he refers to Christians as “justified by faith” or “justified by grace.” In all of these cases, the passive verb forms suggest that we are the recipients of a righteousness that originates outside of ourselves, rather than being the producers of such righteousness. This external righteousness comes to us by faith or by grace.

Even more striking than the passive expressions described in the previous paragraph are active constructions. Cyril uses the expression ἡ δικαιοῦσα χάρις (a present active participle of which χάρις is the subject) 24 times (once in *De ador.*, four times in *Glaph. Pent.*, once in *Expos. Psalm.*, six times in *Com. Is.*, once in *Com. proph. min.*, twice in *Com. Luc.*, five times in *Com. Johan.*, three times in *Frag. Rom.*, and once in *De dog. sol.*). Similarly, in 60 places Cyril uses an active verb form (sometimes an active participle, sometimes an active indicative, subjunctive, or even optative form) with “Christ” or “God” as the subject — expressed or implied (five times in *De ador.*, three times in *Glaph. Pent.*, eleven times in *Expos. Psalm.*, 15 times in *Com. Is.*, nine times in *Com. proph. min.*, twice in *Com. Johan.*, twice in *Com. Luc.*, three times in *Frag. Rom.*, four times in *Trin. dial.*, five times in *Ep. pasch.*, and once in *Hom. frag.*). Thus, there are 84 passages in which Cyril uses various expressions indicating that grace/God/Christ is the active source of the Christian’s righteousness. Interestingly, this is almost exactly the same number as the 86 times when he uses passive constructions of which Christians are the subjects.

Furthermore, among the 60 passages that contain expressions indicating that God or Christ justifies the Christian, there are 43 in which τῇ πίστει (or more rarely, ἐν πίστει or πίστει) also occurs (three of the five in *De ador.*, two of the

three in *Glaph. Pent.*, ten of the eleven in *Expos. Psalm.*, ten of the 15 in *Com. Is.*, all nine in *Com. proph. min.*, both of the two in *Com. Luc.*, one of the three in *Frag. Rom.*, one of the four in *Trin. dial.*, four of the five in *Ep. pasch.*, and the one in *Hom. frag.*) Also, among these 60 passages that contain expressions indicating that God or Christ justifies the Christian, there are seven in which the word $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\tau\iota$ occurs as well (one in *Frag. Rom.*, one in *Frag. Heb.*, one in *Glaph. Pent.*, and four in *Com. Is.*). Cyril strengthens the idea that God or Christ is the active, direct source of the believer's righteousness by indicating that such righteousness comes to a Christian by grace or by faith.

In summary, the language of justification is quite prominent in the Cyrillian corpus, and he carefully uses active and passive verb forms to indicate that God produces this righteousness and that believers receive it by grace and faith. The direct source of the righteousness is God, Christ, or grace. This does not mean that inward transformation is unimportant, and it certainly does not mean that the believer plays no role in such a transformation. But it does mean, I think, that at the most basic level, the righteousness of the Christian is an external righteousness received by faith, rather than an internal righteousness produced cooperatively. It is also noteworthy that almost all of the passages in which Cyril discusses justification occur in his exegetical writings, most of which pre-date the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy in AD 428. Cyril's justification language is thus part of his general theology of salvation which he articulates in his broad exegetical-theological corpus before his attention turns more narrowly to Christology during the struggle with Nestorius. Perhaps another part of the reason this justification language gets so little attention from scholars and churchmen is simply that Cyril's exegetical corpus in general gets relatively little attention in comparison with the substantial scholarly focus on his polemical Christology from the time of the controversy. But justification is an important part of Cyril's soteriology that informs the Christology for which he is much more famous.

III. Justification/Righteousness in Cyril's Exegesis of Four Illustrative Biblical Passages

Now that we have seen Cyril's general patterns for using justification language, I would like to illustrate his understanding more fully by discussing four examples. These come from Cyril's comments on Isaiah 1 (in which Cyril uses the text's proclamation of Judah's sinfulness to discuss justification by faith rather than by our own actions), on Habakkuk 2 (with its well-known assertion that the righteous will live by faith), on John 8 (in which Cyril links Jesus' identity as the "I am" to

justification, among other salvific benefits), and on Romans 3–5 (the *locus classicus* for the Protestant understanding of justification). Looking at Cyril’s exegesis of these key passages will flesh out our understanding of his concept of justification.

A. Isaiah 1

Cyril prefaces his commentary on Isaiah by stressing that even though the prophet points out the sins of Judah repeatedly, he also returns often to the theme of redemption. Cyril writes:

At every point, however, there is mention of redemption through Christ (τῆς διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ λυτρώσεως); it says that in due course on the one hand Israel would be expelled from its relationship with God, and on the other the multitude of the nations would be admitted by being justified through faith in Christ (δικαιουμένη διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ). And so it seems to me that the blessed prophet Isaiah is awarded the crown, not only of Old Testament grace but also of New Testament privilege; he here acts as both Old Testament and New Testament author, and will deliver words of his own composition that are not bereft of the splendor of the evangelical proclamation.⁷

This passage touches on one of Cyril’s most common themes, the contrast between Jews and Christians. Cyril, like other Church Fathers, sees the entire Jewish nation in a way similar to the way John the evangelist sees the Jewish leaders—as people who have thoroughly rejected Christ. Cyril often and forcefully contrasts Jews who rely on the Law for salvation and believers who rely on Christ.⁸ Here, as part of that distinction, he contrasts being expelled from a relationship with God because of one’s breaking the Law and being justified through faith in Christ.

Later, commenting on Isaiah 1:3 (“the ox knows its owner, but Israel does not know me”), Cyril explains that the words should be applied to Christ, whom Israel does not know because it focuses only on the law. He continues:

The Law was also imposed up to the time of correction, as Scripture says. But

⁷ *Com. Is.* Preface, in Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca* (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 70.13. This English translation is from Robert C. Hill, trans., *Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. 1: Chapters 1-14* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2008), 19-20.

⁸ The classic treatment of this theme in Cyril’s writings is Robert L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria’s Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971). See Wilken’s conclusion on p. 227: “Cyril’s points of reference are so Jewish because he is so deeply rooted in the biblical tradition, and it is because he is so concerned with Judaism that the Bible is the chief source of his theology. He knows no other way to interpret Christianity than in relation to Judaism and no other way to view Judaism than as an inferior foreshadowing of Christianity.”

since it was not possible for the shadow to justify us (ἀνέφικτον δικαιοῦν ἡμᾶς δύνασθαι τὴν σκιάν), the only-begotten Word of God appeared to us in the flesh so as to justify by faith those approaching him (ἵνα δικαιώσῃ τῇ πίστει τοὺς προσιόντας αὐτῷ), and rid them of death and sin.⁹

Here Cyril stresses the fact that the Law was a shadow of what was to come, and the shadow cannot make people righteous. Instead, the incarnate Word himself directly justifies those who approach him.

While commenting on Isaiah 1:15 (God will hide his eyes and ears from Israel because of their sins), Cyril argues that the Lord's statement through Isaiah, "I shall no longer tolerate your sins," applies to Israel after the crucifixion of the Savior. He continues, "The fact that they [the Jews] would have mercy shown to them eventually, in fact, when justified by grace in Christ with us (τῇ εἰς Χριστὸν χάριτι μεθ' ἡμῶν δικαιούμενοι), the sacred text proclaims, although as I said the period of their subjection to wrath lasted longer than before."¹⁰ Shortly after this, he explains the statement "wash, make yourselves clean" (Is. 1:6) as a reference to faith and baptism: "It was as a gift they were justified, not from the works of the Law but rather by faith and holy baptism (δικαιουμένου δωρεάν και οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. Μᾶλλον δὲ διὰ τῆς πίστεως, και τοῦ ἁγίου βαπτίσματος)."¹¹

Later in the discussion, while commenting on Isaiah 1:25-28 (a prophecy of destruction on those who forsake the Lord), Cyril writes that Jerusalem rejected God's Son when he was sent from heaven and insulted him, "despite his justifying the offender and ridding it of former sins through faith (καίτοι δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ, και τῶν ἀρχαίων πλημμελημάτων ἀπαλλάττοντα διὰ τῆς πίστεως)."¹² Shortly after this, Cyril comments that the judgment Isaiah foretells is aimed at those who "are addicted to foolish and sacrilegious living, with no regard for Christ, who can save them, forgive their sins, and justify them by grace (και Χριστοῦ μη πεφροντικός τοῦ σώζειν εἰδότος, και ἀνιέντος ἐγκλήματα και δικαιοῦντος τῇ χάριτι)."¹³

Thus we see that Cyril's extended discussion of Isaiah 1 is (among other things) a vehicle for contrasting a life devoted to the Law and the life that flows from devotion to Christ. In the process, Cyril emphasizes that our righteousness comes directly from Christ, from grace, and that it is received by faith. It is a righteousness given to us from the outside, not ultimately one that is accomplished by us or even within us through our cooperation with grace.

9 *Com. Is. 1 (PG 70:20) (Hill, Commentary on Isaiah, 1:25).*

10 *Com. Is. 1 (PG 70:37) (Hill, Commentary on Isaiah, 1:39).*

11 *Com. Is. 1 (PG 70:40) (Hill, Commentary on Isaiah, 1:40).*

12 *Com. Is. 1 (PG 70:57) (Hill, Commentary on Isaiah, 1:55).*

13 *Com. Is. 1 (PG 70:61) (Hill, Commentary on Isaiah, 1:58).*

B. Habakkuk 2

Habakkuk 2:2-4 refers to the fulfillment of the prophet's vision and encourages the hearers to wait patiently. In Cyril's version of the text, the hearers are to wait not for "it" (the fulfillment of the vision), but for "him."¹⁴ Cyril points out that in the short term, the referent of the word "him" is Cyrus who will deliver the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, but ultimately, the referent of "him" is Christ. Thus, the one who shrinks back in 2:3 is the one who rejects faith in Christ and offends God, whereas the righteous one who lives by faith in 2:4 is the believer in Christ. Of the latter, Cyril writes:

The one who overcomes lethargy and *delay*, on the other hand, and introduces into their mind and heart love and faith in him, enjoys a reward for such an attitude, namely, the special privilege of an uncurtailed life, rejection of sin, and sanctification through the Spirit (τὸν διὰ Πνεύματος ἁγιασμόν). We have, in fact, been justified (δεδικαιώμεθα) "not by the works of the Law," as Scripture says, but by faith in Christ (διὰ πίστεως δὲ μᾶλλον τῆς εἰς Χριστόν); while "the Law brings wrath," summoning transgressors to retribution, grace offsets wrath, undoing the offenses.¹⁵

Cyril continues with a long comparison of the Babylonians and Satan, and he refers Habakkuk's declaration in 2:8 that the surviving peoples will despoil Babylon to the despoiling of Satan by believers. Cyril describes these believers as "those justified by faith through Christ and sanctified by the Spirit (τῶν ἐν πίστει δεδικαιωμένων διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡγιασμένων ἐν Πνεύματι)."¹⁶ In this passage, like the longer one quoted in the previous paragraph, Cyril writes not only of justification by faith in Christ, but also of sanctification through (or "in") the Spirit. Here we see the linking of justification and sanctification that Keating has noted and that I have mentioned above. I will return to this link between the two later in this article.

14 Here the Hebrew verbs and pronouns in question are masculine singular, as is the word for "vision." In Greek, the word for "vision" is neuter plural, yet in the LXX the pronouns and verbs are still masculine singular. The translators of the LXX thus see a shift in the focus of this passage from the vision itself to a person who is to come. Cyril follows the LXX in this and interprets the coming person as both Cyrus (the near deliverer) and Christ (the messianic fulfillment of the prophecy).

15 *Com. Hab. 2*, in P. E. Pusey, *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in xii prophetas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1868), 2:95. English translation in *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on the Twelve Prophets, Volume 2*, Fathers of the Church, trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 116:350.

16 *Com. Hab. 2*, in Pusey, *Cyrilli in xii prophetas*, 2:102; FOTC 116:355.

C. John 8

In book 5 of *Com. Johan.*, Cyril comments on John 8, in which Jesus three times uses the phrase “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι) to refer to himself (John 8:24, 28, 58) and explains his identity in contrast to Abraham. Cyril’s comments as we have them today end with John 8:43 and thus do not include Jesus’ climactic affirmation in 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I am.” But as Cyril comments on 8:24 (“For unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins”), he writes:

He makes the way of salvation crystal clear and shows them what road to travel to ascend to the life of the saints and to arrive at the city above, the heavenly Jerusalem. Not only must one believe (πιστεῦσαι), he says, but he insists that one will have to believe in him (εἰς αὐτόν). For we are justified when we believe in him as God from God (δικαιούμεθα γὰρ πιστεύοντες εἰς αὐτόν ὡς εἰς Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ), as Savior and redeemer and king of all and truly Lord.¹⁷

At the beginning of this passage, the fact that Cyril mentions the way of salvation and a road to travel might lead the reader to expect some sort of requirement that we actively fulfill in order to achieve our salvation. Indeed, if Cyril had understood salvation/righteousness primarily in terms of an inward transformation in which the believer’s active cooperation played a major part, this would have been a very natural place for him to discuss that role. But he does not do this. Instead, he follows this statement with the present passive verb form δικαιούμεθα in connection with the present active participle πιστεύοντες. What we do – the road we travel – is to believe in Christ, but what happens as we believe is that we are justified (passive) with a righteousness that comes from outside ourselves.

Somewhat later in this discussion, while he comments on John 8:32 (“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”), Cyril contrasts the Law with Christ who is the Truth. He writes:

True salvation, then, is not in them (in the ordinances of the law, I mean). Nor could one gain from there the thrice longed-for freedom (from sin, I mean). But when we leap just above the types and focus on the beauty of worship in the spirit and recognize “the truth,” that is, Christ, we are justified through faith in him (διὰ τῆς εἰς αὐτόν πίστεως δικαιούμεθα). And when we are justified (δικαιούμενοι), we pass over to true freedom, no longer ranked as slaves, as we were before, but as children of God.¹⁸

17 *Com. Johan.* 5.4, in *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium*, ed. P. E. Pusey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), 2:19. English translation in *Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on John, Volume I, Ancient Christian Texts*, trans. David R. Maxwell (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2013), 334.

18 *Com. Johan.* 5.5, in Pusey, *Cyrilli in Joannis evangelium*, 2:61-2 (Maxwell, 354).

Here again, we see that Cyril links justification to a faith that is specifically *in Christ*. His point is not that faith is an action that makes us righteous, but that faith is the channel for justification if that faith focuses on the correct object, Christ himself. Notice also that justification is linked to the freedom that comes with being children of God rather than slaves. For Cyril, justification is closely tied to adoption, which is of course a major theme in all his writings.¹⁹

Shortly after this, as he comments on John 8:33 (in which the Jews claim that they are Abraham's children and have never been slaves), Cyril writes that Abraham was illustrious not by his human birth, but through faith in God. Cyril quotes Gen. 15:6 and continues:

His faith was reckoned to him as righteousness (ἐλογίσθη δὲ αὐτῷ ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην), and the righteousness that comes from faith (ἡ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη) has become his basis for freedom before God. Therefore, when he was justified by believing (ὅτε πιστεύσας ἐδικαιώθη), that is, when he shook off the low birth that is from sin, then he shone forth illustrious, noble and free. Foolishly, then, the Jews reject the grace that frees the very founder of their race and advance only to the one who was freed by it.²⁰

In this passage we see again that justification is connected to spiritual freedom and that this righteousness/freedom comes through faith. Notice also that the source of this righteousness and the accompanying freedom is grace. It is ironic in Cyril's eyes that the Jews attach themselves to Abraham who was righteous/free through faith, even as they reject the grace that produced his righteousness/freedom.

Cyril concludes his discussion of Abraham's slavery and subsequent freedom/righteousness by writing:

The Lord was hinting that the blessed Abraham himself, who was once enslaved to sin and was set free through faith alone in Christ (διὰ μόνης τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως ἐλευθερωθεὶς), was not sufficient to pass on this spiritual nobility (πνευματικὴν εὐγένειαν) to others, since he is not authorized with the power to free others when he did not on his own put off the slavery of sin. Nor did he bestow freedom on himself; he received it from another, namely, from Christ himself, who justifies (παρ' ἐτέρου δὲ ταύτην λαβὼν, αὐτοῦ δηλονότι τοῦ δικαιοῦντος Χριστοῦ).²¹

19 For my summary of this important aspect of Cyril's thought, see Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 76-8.

20 *Com. Johan.* 5.5, in Pusey, *Cyrilli in Joannis evangelium*, 2:63 (Maxwell, 354), translation slightly modified.

21 *Com. Johan.* 5.5, in Pusey, *Cyrilli in Joannis evangelium*, 2:65 (Maxwell, 355).

In this passage Cyril links another idea – spiritual nobility – to the ideas of freedom and righteousness he has been developing. And here again his emphasis is that Abraham received all of these things from another, from Christ who justifies. With respect to the broader concerns of Cyril’s theology, the point here is that one who receives grace/freedom/righteousness/nobility cannot pass these on to others. Only the one who is the source of these qualities can give them to others, and Christ can be this source only because he is by nature God’s Son.²² With regard to the specific focus of this article, it is clear here that Cyril sees righteousness not as something we accomplish, nor even something that God helps us accomplish or accomplishes in us with our cooperation. Rather, righteousness is something given to us by another – by Christ who justifies us. This righteousness comes to us only through a faith whose object is the Christ who alone can make us righteous.

Therefore, Cyril’s extended discussion of John 8 ties justification or righteousness to the broader themes of freedom, nobility, and adoption, all of which are given to us by Christ, God’s Son. In connection with these broader themes, righteousness for Cyril is not a human achievement, or even an achievement wrought jointly by God and human beings, but rather something that Christ directly gives the Christian from without.

D. Romans 3–5

Unfortunately, Cyril’s commentary on the Pauline epistles survives only in fragments. With respect to Romans 3-5, these fragments include comments on 3:21, 3:27, 3:31, 4:2, 5:11, 5:13-18, and 5:20. Thus we do not have Cyril’s comments on the most central passage of all, Romans 3:24-25, although he alludes to this passage in his comments on 3:21 and 3:27. In spite of the fragmentary nature of our evidence, there is enough material available for us to be confident about the way Cyril handles this *locus classicus* for justification.

In a substantial fragment on Romans 3:21 (“But now, apart from the Law a righteousness of God has been revealed”), Cyril contrasts the Jews, who trust in the righteousness that comes through the keeping of the Law, with Paul, who declares that he counts all such righteousness to be rubbish in comparison with knowing Christ (Phil. 3:8), who regards the ministry of justification to be far more glorious than the ministry of the Law that brings condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9), and who refuses to impose on Gentiles a yoke that the Jews themselves are not able to bear (Acts 15:10). Cyril continues:

²² See chapter four of Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, for my explication of these themes.

Therefore, since the Gentiles were under sin as those who were ignorant of the Creator, but the Jews were guilty as transgressors of the Law, the people on earth were in absolute need of Christ who justifies (ἐδέησεν ἀναγκαίως τοῖς οὔσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τοῦ δικαιοῦντος Χριστοῦ). For we have been justified (δεδικαιώμεθα) “not from works that we ourselves have done in righteousness (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ), but according to the riches of his mercy” (Tit. 3:5). For he was the one who spoke long ago through the voice of the prophets, saying, “I am the one who will blot out your transgressions . . . and I will remember them no more” (Is. 43:25). For justifying grace (ἡ δικαιοῦσα χάρις) comes upon all equally, that is, upon Jews and Gentiles, because “all have sinned and lack God’s glory” (Rom. 3:23).²³

Here we see a sharp contrast between a righteousness that we (Jews or Gentiles) could hypothetically achieve ourselves, and a righteousness that comes from Christ, from grace. Since no one – even one who is blameless according to the Law – is actually righteous in and of himself, we all need justification from without. Notice also that in this passage, Cyril’s accent is not primarily on justification itself, but on who justifies us. We do not merely need righteousness; we need the Christ who justifies, the grace that justifies. In Cyril’s thought, justification is never an independent concept but is directly connected to Christ who provides it.

The next fragment we possess from Cyril’s Romans commentary deals with Romans 3:27 (“Where then is boasting? It is excluded”). Cyril writes:

For who will boast at all, or on what grounds, given that all have become worthless and have been shut out from the straight path, and there is absolutely no one who does good (cf. Rom. 3:12)? Therefore he says that boasting is excluded, that is, it is cast out and carried away, since it has no place among us. On what grounds is it excluded? [On the grounds that] we have been made rich by the passing over of previous sins (Rom. 3:25), having been justified as a gift by mercy and grace in Christ (ἐλέω καὶ χάριτι δικαιοῦμενοι δωρεὰν ἐν Χριστῷ – cf. Rom. 3:24).²⁴

Here again we see that Cyril draws a strong contrast (just as Paul does) between any righteousness we might be able to achieve and the righteousness Christ provides for us. Our righteousness – such as it is – is worthless, and we have no reason to boast. But we have been enriched by being justified in Christ by both mercy and grace.

²³ *Frag. Rom.*, in P. E. Pusey, *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), 3:178-79 (my translation).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 179 (my translation).

In a long fragment on Romans 5:11 (“And not only this, but we also boast in God”), Cyril quotes John 3:16 and emphasizes that the one whom God sent was truly his own Son, the Logos made flesh. He stresses that the atonement Christ accomplished defeated death and corruption, both of which were controlled by Satan, and he quotes Hebrews 2:14-15 in the process of making this argument. Cyril then anticipates the second half of Romans 5 by discussing the condemnation that came to all through the sin of Adam, and he states:

For the Son came down out of the heavens, dissolving the charges [of the Law against humanity], justifying the ungodly one by faith (δικαιῶν ἐν πίστει τὸν ἄσεβῆ), and as God transforming the nature of man into incorruption and raising it up to what it had been at first. For whatever is in Christ is a new creation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17), because a new root has also been planted. He has also become the second Adam, not like the first one who was the source of wrath and rejection from above for those who came forth from him, but rather the protector and the grantor of communion with God (δοτὴρ τῆς πρὸς Θεὸν οικειότητος), through sanctification and incorruption and the righteousness that comes by faith (δὲ ἁγιασμοῦ τε καὶ ἀφθαρσίας καὶ τῆς ἐν πίστει δικαιοσύνης).²⁵

In this passage, Cyril links justification to two major themes of his soteriology that I have not yet mentioned in this article – salvation as a return to a previously incorruptible condition,²⁶ and salvation as communion with God.²⁷ He also (as elsewhere) links justification to sanctification, and again, I will return to this connection later. Here as elsewhere, it is clear that the righteousness Cyril has in mind is one that Christ directly gives the Christian, from the outside.

The most extended extant fragment of Cyril’s comments on these chapters concerns Romans 5:13-18, and a fairly lengthy portion of this fragment is worth citing here. As Cyril comments on Romans 5:16 (“And the free gift is not like what came through the one man’s sin”), he asks rhetorically:

For if it was necessary, as he [Paul] says, that from one man, or rather through one man, Adam’s condemnation passed through to all men in accordance with their likeness to him (for as I said, he was the root of the race that suffered corruption), how would it not also come about, in the case of a man acceptable and beloved to God by faith, that the many must be justified

²⁵ *Frag. Rom.*, in Pusey, *Cyrilli in Joannis evangelium*, 3:182 (my translation).

²⁶ For my explication of this aspect of Cyril’s thought, see Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, 64-9.

²⁷ The word Cyril uses here for “communion” is *οικειότης*, which is one of his favorite words in his exegetical writings. See my discussion in Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, 83-103.

(δικαιοῦσθαι πολλούς) from the righteous act of that one man following the many transgressions (τὸ δεῖν ἐξ ἑνὸς δικαίωματος ἐκ πολλῶν παραπτωμάτων δικαιοῦσθαι πολλούς)?²⁸

Shortly thereafter, Cyril writes:

Therefore, just as Christ the second Adam has been justified, he will walk at first in the way by which justification (ἡ δικαίωσις) will surely come to us. But when we say that Christ has been justified (δεδικαιώσθαι), we do not mean this as if he were once made unrighteous, and through a free gift had gone before us into a better condition, that is, justification (δικαίωσιν). Instead, we mean that he was himself the first and only man upon the earth who “did no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth” (Is. 53:9).²⁹

This passage is the only one I have found in the Cyrillian corpus that uses a passive form of the verb δικαίωω to refer to Christ. Under the influence of the Adam-Christ comparison, Cyril describes both Christ and believers as “justified” (passive). But he clarifies his meaning by spelling out that Christ is not justified in the same way we are. He is justified because he is sinless, but we are justified because righteousness comes to us as a free gift through the righteous act of Christ. Through this clarification, Cyril renders even more apparent his constant insistence that righteousness comes to *us* from the outside. Furthermore, Cyril also indicates that Christ’s obedience/sinlessness is the direct source of both his righteousness and ours. He is just because – considered as a man, as the second Adam – he perfectly obeyed God and committed no sin. In contrast, we are justified because the second Adam who obeyed perfectly grants us his own righteousness.

These passages from Cyril’s comments on Romans 3–5 build upon and add to the picture of justification he develops in the other passages we have seen in this section. It is clear that, in Cyril’s mind, justification is something that Christ actively accomplishes, something that comes to Christians from outside ourselves. Likewise, Cyril’s emphasis is not on the concept of justification *per se*, or even on the Christian’s state of justification, but on the one who justifies us: only God’s natural Son, who alone is righteous in himself, could grant us this righteousness. Furthermore, Cyril ties justification closely to other themes of his soteriology – adoption as children of God, sanctification or holiness, freedom from death and condemnation, and restoration to mankind’s originally incorruptible condition.

²⁸ *Frag. Rom.*, in Pusey, *Cyrilli in Joannis evangelium*, 3:185 (my translation).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 185.

IV. Justification/Righteousness and Sanctification in Cyril

We have seen that Keating argues that Cyril does not distinguish between justification and sanctification, and in the previous section, we saw that in two of the passages I considered (on Hab. 2 and Rom. 5), Cyril directly links the two concepts. In fact, Cyril's writings contain 82 passages in which he connects the two by using the words (either verb or noun forms) in parallel (four in *De ador.*, ten in *Glaph. Pent.*, five in *Expos. Psalm.*, 13 in *Com. Is.*, 13 in *Com. proph. min.*, one in *Com. Matt.*, four in *Com. Luc.*, nine in *Com. Johan.*, three in *Frag. Rom.*, one in *Frag. Heb.*, seven in *Thes.*, one in *Trin. Dial.*, three in *De dog. sol.*, three in *Resp. Tib.*, and five in *Ep. pasch.*). As I have indicated above, the prevalence of this link between δικαιοσύνη and ἁγιασμός in Cyril's writings would seem to imply that his understanding of δικαιοσύνη is not similar to that of classical Protestantism, in which justification and sanctification are sharply distinguished. It is important to recognize, however, that Cyril's understanding of sanctification is not, at heart, a concept of an active process of becoming holy, in which the Christian collaborates with the Holy Spirit. Instead, Cyril regards sanctification most fundamentally as a participatory holiness that is granted to the believer when he/she is united to the Holy Spirit.³⁰ A look at three illustrative passages should serve to illustrate the way Cyril understands sanctification and its relation to justification.

Commenting on Isaiah 8:14-16 (which, in the LXX contrasts the house of Jacob that will be crushed with those who keep the Law under seal so as not to learn it), Cyril describes in his typical fashion the difference between Jews and Christians. He asks who those who keep the Law under seal are, and he answers:

Those justified and sanctified in Christ through the Spirit (Οἱ ἐν Χριστῷ δηλονότι δεδικαιωμένοι τε καὶ ἁγιασμένοι διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος), to whom could be applied the statement, "Let the light of your face be shown to us, O Lord"; the Son is the image and likeness and as it were the face of the God and Father. Light sent from him on us is the Holy Spirit, through whom we are sealed by being conformed to the original image through sanctification (πρὸς εἰκόνα τὴν πρώτην ἀναμορφούμενοι δι' ἁγιασμοῦ), for we have been made "in the image and likeness" of God the creator.³¹

Here we see that sanctification, as Cyril understands it, is directly tied to Christ and consists of conformity to him. It is not so much a process of becoming

³⁰ For my brief discussion of this concept in Cyril's writings, see Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, 65, 76.

³¹ *Com. Is.* 8 (PG 70:236) (Hill, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 1:193).

holy as it is a present sharing in Christ's holiness. And here, as elsewhere, Cyril treats justification and sanctification as synonyms. Neither is a righteousness or holiness that the Christian achieves (with or without the help of grace); both are a participation in the righteousness/holiness of another: Christ. Cyril continues by contrasting those who live in a Jewish manner with those who live by faith, and he concludes: "In living by the Law you have fallen away from grace. For by faith we wait for the hope of righteousness (διὰ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα)."³² Here Cyril indicates that the posture of the Christian life, the posture of one living by grace, is one of waiting and hoping for a righteousness that comes from Christ.

In his commentary on Micah 7:16-17 (which declares that the nations will be ashamed of their might), Cyril writes:

By *nations* here he means the loathsome and unclean herds of demons; when they see those called in Christ to justification, to sanctification, to redemption, to sonship, to incorruptibility, to glory (τούς ἐν Χριστῷ καλουμένους εἰς δικαίωσιν, εἰς ἀγιασμόν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν, εἰς υἰοθεσίαν, εἰς ἀφθαρσίαν, εἰς δόξαν), to a life that is unstricted and free, then it is that they will *be ashamed* . . .³³

In this passage one should notice that justification is linked not only to sanctification but to redemption, sonship, etc. Justification and sanctification are not discrete states but rather are synonymous aspects of a multi-faceted salvation. Furthermore, we can recognize that just as sonship, incorruptibility, and glory belong to Christ and become ours by participation, so also – in Cyril's mind – righteousness and holiness belong to Christ and become ours as we participate in him. Shortly after this, Cyril writes that the demons are right to feel ashamed when they see Christians, because the news about us is extraordinary. This news is that Christ has died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:8):

. . . in order that we who were formerly guilty of terrible and insupportable failings should now be sanctified (νῦν ὤμεν ἡγιασμένοι), "not by works of righteousness that we ourselves have performed (Οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοσύνης ἃ ἐποιήσαμεν ἡμεῖς), but" (Tit. 3:5) through mercy and grace (ἐλέω καὶ χάριτι), so that we who were formerly distressed and devoid of all hope should now be loved, the cynosure of all eyes, "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17).³⁴

32 *Com. Is. 8* (PG 70:236) (Hill, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 1:194; translation slightly modified).

33 *Com. Mic. 7*, in Pusey, *Cyrilli in xii prophetas*, 1:736; FOTC 116:275.

34 *Com. Mic. 7*, in Pusey, *Cyrilli in xii prophetas*, 1:737; FOTC 116:276.

One should note that here, Cyril specifically denies that our sanctification or holiness comes about by righteous acts that we might have done. Sanctification comes by mercy and grace, and it focuses on who we are in Christ—his co-heirs and beloved ones. Sanctification, like justification, is something Christ directly gives us when we participate in him.

As Cyril comments on John 6:69 (in which Peter affirms that Christ is the holy one of God), he commends the faith of the apostles and explains that believing and coming to know are the same thing because the great truths of the faith are apprehended by faith. He argues that faith comes first as a foundation, and that knowledge is built on that faith. He then asserts, “Christ is for us a beginning and a foundation for sanctification and righteousness (ἀρχὴ γὰρ ἡμῖν καὶ θεμέλιος εἰς ἁγιασμόν καὶ δικαιοσύνην ὁ Χριστός), through faith, that is, and in no other way. For that is how he dwells in us.”³⁵ From this point Cyril goes into one of his common explanations of the difference between Christ and Christians – he is the true Son of the living God, but we are adopted sons of God by grace. By preceding that familiar refrain with the statement quoted just above, Cyril shows that only the true Son of God can be a beginning and foundation for our salvation. Again he links sanctification and justification, and he emphasizes that *both of them* come to us through the indwelling of the true Son, which happens as we believe.

These passages are illustrations of a consistent pattern that Cyril employs in discussing justification and sanctification. He connects the two, not because he believes that justification is something we achieve, but because he believes that even sanctification is something given to us from the outside, by Christ through grace. Righteousness and holiness are very similar concepts, and Cyril treats both of these as properties of Christ, the righteous and holy one, just as he treats sonship as a property of Christ, God’s unique and true Son. We become righteous and holy in the same way we become sons/daughters of God, through participation in the one who possesses these properties by nature. In Cyril’s understanding, it is not just justification, but also sanctification and adoption, that are by grace through faith.

Here it is also worth elaborating on a related issue that the previous discussion has highlighted: the relation between Cyril’s Christology and his understanding of justification/sanctification. One could argue that just as Cyril rejects a separation between divine and human action in Christ’s person, so also he rejects a separation between divine (justifying) action and human (cooperating) action in the believer’s salvation. This statement is true, but it does not quite go far enough. The point of Cyril’s Christology is not merely – and not primarily

35 *Com. Johan.* 4.4, in Pusey, *Cyrolli in Joannis evangelium*, 1:576 (Maxwell, 257).

– that divine and human action are inseparable in salvation. It is that God the Son became human precisely so that he, God, could do *as man* something for human beings that we could not do for ourselves. This Christological emphasis dovetails closely with the idea that Christ gives the believer a righteousness from without. For Cyril, even the human side of salvation is not primarily *our* human action; it is *Christ's* human action. In order for that human action to accomplish our salvation, it had to be human action performed by God the Son. Throughout Cyril's struggle against Nestorianism, he argued against an understanding of Christ as a divinely-indwelt man who could lead us in doing what we needed to do for our salvation. Leaving aside the question of whether Cyril understood Nestorius correctly, his own point was clear: we *cannot* do what is necessary for our salvation, and so we need a Savior who is more than just a divinely-indwelt leader. We needed God himself to do as man what was necessary but what we human beings could not do. The "asymmetry" of Cyril's Christology – in which Christ is fully human, but his humanity subsists in the hypostasis of the Logos – is directly related to this understanding of our inability to save ourselves. And it leads Cyril to a corresponding asymmetry in soteriology – at the most fundamental level, we do not *produce* righteousness within ourselves, nor do we even cooperate with grace in producing such inward righteousness. Rather, most fundamentally, we *receive* another's righteousness – the righteousness of God's Son who became human in order to unite us to himself and thus to give us his righteousness.

IV. Conclusions

From what I have written, it is clear that there are important similarities and differences between Cyril's understanding of justification and that of Protestantism. Cyril repeatedly writes of the believer's righteousness as one that is given by another, by Christ, from the outside. This emphasis on Christ as the source of the Christian's righteousness is similar to the Protestant understanding of the *passive* nature of the Christian's righteousness. Cyril, as much as Luther or any Protestant subsequently, sees the righteousness or holiness of the Christian as that which *belongs to Christ* and which Christ *actively* grants to the believer, who *passively* receives it through faith and grace. But as we have seen, there are also differences between Cyril and many classical Protestant writers. Cyril does not adopt a forensic framework as the dominant aspect of his soteriology. He does not distinguish justification and sanctification to any great degree at all. And he certainly does not make justification the central idea of his soteriology.

Thus, Cyril stands as a caution against the potential dangers of a theology that is too exclusively forensic or makes the justification/sanctification distinction too sharply.

When one examines Cyril's relation to modern Eastern Orthodoxy, we find that there are also similarities and differences. The participatory nature of salvation shines very clearly in both Cyril and modern Orthodoxy. But on the other hand, two things about Cyril's understanding of participation stand in partial contrast to some expressions of modern Orthodoxy. First, the basis for Cyril's understanding of participation is not the *qualities* of God (whether they be the energies, as in later Palamite theology; qualities such as incorruption and immortality that dominate the attention of many Greek patristic writers; or even qualities like righteousness and holiness on which this article has focused), but the *person* of Christ. For Cyril, participation is at heart personal. We become righteous when we are personally united to the one who is righteous, to Christ. (Notice again that this exactly parallels the fact that we become sons of God when we are united to Christ, the true Son.) Second, the very fact that participation is at heart personal means that it is not fundamentally gradual or progressive. The outworkings of union with Christ are indeed gradual, but union with Christ himself, effected in baptism at the very beginning of Christian life, lies at the heart of Cyril's concept of participation. To say this even more directly, for Cyril even deification is primarily the present state of the believer, rather than the culmination of a process, and his teaching on justification undergirds this fact.

At this point, readers from both Protestant and Orthodox traditions may object that their tradition does in fact emphasize personal union with Christ. This is true. There are some – perhaps many – voices within both traditions that possess such an emphasis. But my point is that in both Protestantism and Orthodoxy, the centrality of personal union with Christ tends to be obscured by these other emphases: forensic justification in Protestantism and a more mystical and/or progressive approach to union with God in Orthodoxy. I ask my readers to recognize these tendencies, even though the mistakes to which they can lead are sometimes successfully avoided.

With that caveat registered, I suggest that as one looks at these two sets of similarities and differences between Cyril on one hand and either Protestantism or Orthodoxy on the other, they expose a false dichotomy that has perhaps hindered dialogue between the two groups. Protestants, schooled in on-going disputes with Roman Catholicism, are often quick to point out the difference between imputed righteousness and imparted or infused righteousness, and the classical Protestant concept of justification is closely tied to the first of these, in

opposition to the second. It seems to me, though, that Protestants sometimes extend this dichotomy into an opposition between imputed righteousness and participatory righteousness, thus unhelpfully applying concepts borrowed from anti-Catholic polemic to anti-Orthodox polemic. (Whether those concepts are appropriate even in dialogue with Roman Catholics is another question, but one I will not address here.) I believe Cyril's thought demonstrates that this is a false dichotomy. Instead, Cyril teaches us that participatory righteousness – or better, our participation in the one who is himself righteous – is the very heart of imputed righteousness. To say this in Protestant terms, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the Christian when the Christian is united to Christ, who is the righteous one. But to say the same thing in Orthodox terms, participation in Christ, because it is a personal participation granted to the believer at the beginning of Christian life, implies that his righteousness becomes ours.

As a result, I suggest that a deeper consideration of Cyril's doctrine of justification can both challenge Protestants and the Orthodox, and help to uncover latent common ground between them. Protestants need to recognize that justification is not merely or even mainly transactional, but primarily personal and organic. We are united to Christ as a person, and as a result, his righteousness is imputed to us. The forensic crediting of righteousness grows out of the personal union. At the same time, the Orthodox need to recognize that the gradual process of deification (even the continual reception of life-giving grace through the Eucharist, one of Cyril's greatest emphases) is grounded in an initial personal union with Christ, and thus, both righteousness and deification are at heart gifts that Christ gives us when he gives himself to us. Perhaps both Protestants and Orthodox can then recognize that as Christians, we are righteous, holy, and even divine, because – and only because – we are in Christ. And if we are righteous, holy, and divine in Christ, then throughout Christian life we will progressively become more and more who we already are.

Cyril's Works Cited in this Article

Abbreviated Title	Full Title	Location of Best Greek Text
<i>De ador.</i>	<i>De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate</i>	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 68:132-1125.
<i>Glaph. Pent.</i>	<i>Glaphyra in Pentateuchum</i>	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 69:9-677.
<i>Expos. Psalm.</i>	<i>Expositio in Psalmos</i>	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 69:717-1273.
<i>Com. Is.</i>	<i>Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam</i>	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 70:9-1449.
<i>Com. proph. min.</i>	<i>Commentarius in 12 prophetas minores</i>	P. E. Pusey, <i>Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in xii prophetas</i> , 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1868).
<i>Com. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Matthaëum</i>	J. Reuss, <i>Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche, Texte und Untersuchungen</i> (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957), 61:153-269.
<i>Com. Luc.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Lucam</i>	J. Sickenberger, <i>Fragmente der Homilien des Cyrill von Alexandrien zum Lukasevangelium, Texte und Untersuchungen 34</i> (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1909), 76-107.
<i>Com. Johan.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Joannem</i>	P. E. Pusey, <i>Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium</i> , 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872).
<i>Frag. Rom.</i>	<i>Fragmenta in sancti Pauli epistulam ad Romanos</i>	P. E. Pusey, <i>Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), 3:173-248.
<i>Frag. Heb.</i>	<i>Fragmenta in sancti Pauli epistulam ad Hebraeos</i>	P. E. Pusey, <i>Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), 3:362-423

<i>Trin. dial.</i>	<i>De sancta trinitate dialogi 7</i>	G.-M. de Durand, <i>Cyrille d'Alexandrie: Dialogues sur la Trinité</i> , 3 vols., Sources chrétiennes 231, 237, 246 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976, 1977, 1978).
<i>Thes.</i>	<i>Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali trinitate</i>	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 75:9-656.
<i>Ep. pasch.</i>	<i>Epistulae paschales</i>	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 77:401-981.
<i>De dog. sol.</i>	<i>Tractatu de dogmatum solutione</i>	P. E. Pusey, <i>Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), 3:549-566
<i>Resp. Tib.</i>	<i>Responsiones ad Tiberium diaconum sociosque suos</i>	P. E. Pusey, <i>Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), 3:577-602.
<i>Hom. div.</i>	<i>Homiliae diversae</i>	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> (Paris: Migne, 1857-1866), 77:1096-1100.
<i>Hom. frag.</i>	<i>Homiliarum incertarum fragmenta</i>	P. E. Pusey, <i>Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), 3:461-468, 470-475.